



# COLORADO DOMESTIC PROGRAM GUIDE



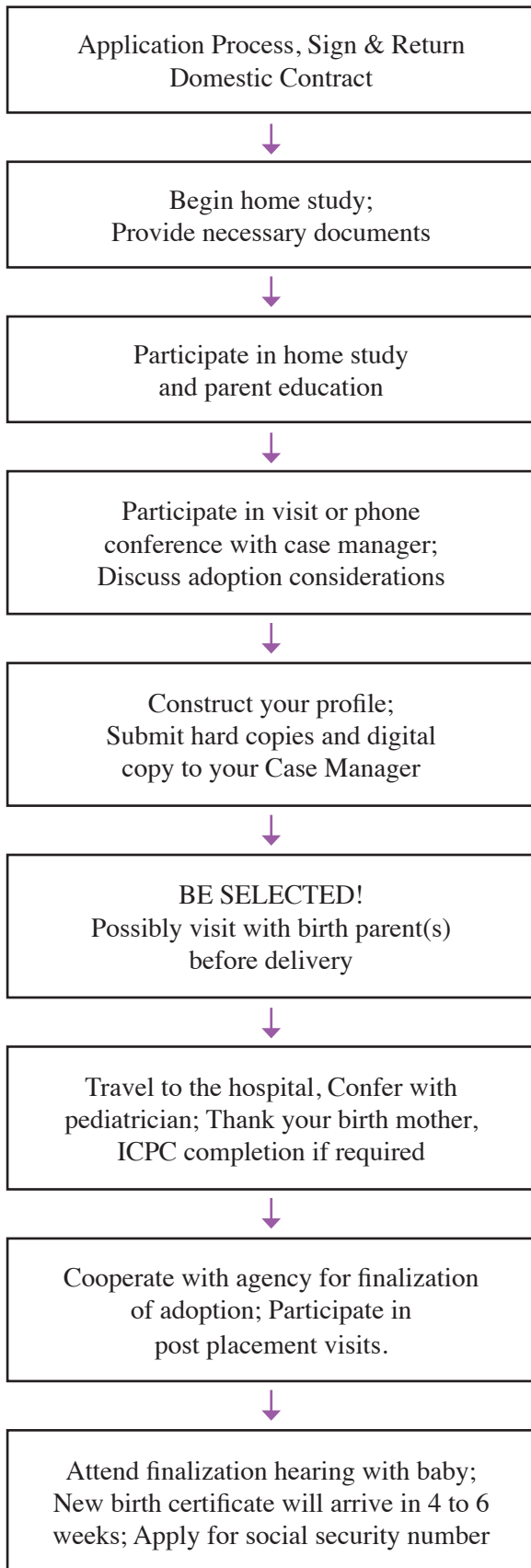
ALL ABOUT ADOPTION SERVICES, INC.

COLORADO BUSINESS OFFICE: 105 Sioux Drive, Berthoud, CO 80513, 970-532-0400 ■ Fax: 970-532-0402

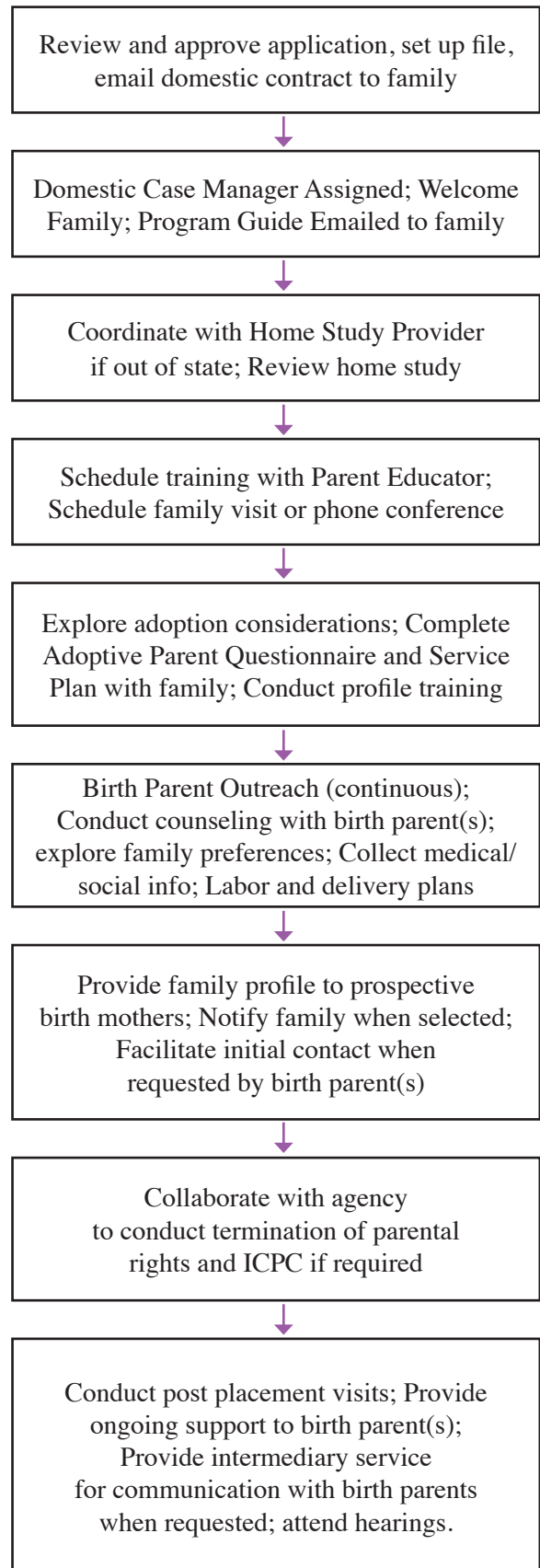
[www.aaadoption.org](http://www.aaadoption.org) ■ [info@aaadoption.com](mailto:info@aaadoption.com)

# PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO



## WHAT AGENCY WILL DO



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The possibility of getting to know the birth parent(s), possibly attending your child's birth and/or being at the hospital awaiting your child's birth, getting a first-hand medical history for your child, and caring for your child from his or her first moments of life, are all things that make domestic adoption a deeply emotional experience. Because of the variations in what birth parents want and hope for in their adoption planning, it is difficult to say exactly what your process will look like.

Steps you can anticipate:

1. You apply and are approved as a All About Adoption Services, Inc. adoptive family.
2. Decide on Domestic Program A, B, or both.
3. You complete your home study (1), read and complete the adoptive parent questionnaire (APQ), create your adoptive family profile. Once these 3 steps are completed, you will be placed in the active pool of waiting adoptive parents. While waiting, you will participate and complete 24 hours of mandatory adoptive parenting education training.

Your domestic counselor (DC's) will be doing the expectant parent/birth parent outreach, intake, initial assessment & approval to enter our domestic program. Once accepted and confirmed, our DC's will provide all necessary & on-going counseling and support throughout the entire pregnancy and adoption process. This will include, but is not limited to, exploring with the prospective birth parents the level of ongoing counseling that is desired/required, the amount of financial assistance that may be required, the level of openness they are seeking pre and post adoption, and the best course of action for termination of parental rights.

You will be provided with the birth parent's social & medical history questionnaire. This questionnaire is completed by the birth parents, and not by a medical professional. You will also be given an estimate on the amount of financial support the birth mother may require. Your DC will call you to review all of the above-mentioned information, as well as provide you with a synopsis of the birth mother's situation, reasons for desiring an adoption plan, counseling status with us so far, and gender/race/& health status of baby if known. We will share with you everything that we know about the prospective birth parents to date. Based on this information, you will initial each page of the social & medical history indicating that you have read, understand, and acknowledge the content and will return this document back to your DC. You will also be presented with AAA's match acceptance & disclosure form. It is important to make your commitment to the birth mother as expeditiously as possible. You will do so by reading and signing the match form and returning it to your DC either in person or via fax within 72 hours of match proposal. We have learned through experience that making birth parents wait longer than this for a response can seriously jeopardize their excitement and investment of selecting you as an adoptive family. If more time is needed than this, you will need to discuss the reasons and seek approval from your DC. More time is usually not granted with the exception of cases in which adoptive parents are seeking and waiting for a review of the birth mother's (or baby's) complicated medical situation by an OB/GYN, Pediatrician, or Specialist, i.e. the unborn child is high risk for a particular medical condition, hence medical consultation is required. We understand that this process may take some time, dependent upon the availability of the medical specialists. You may have some contact (phone, email, or face to face meeting) with the birth mother shortly after your commitment to her situation (match acceptance).

The BIG DAY arrives! You will receive notification from either your DC or the birth mother herself (depending on the situation you have established with her so far) that she is in labor at the hospital. If you are in-state but far from home, you may want to stay at a hotel near the hospital. If you are out-of-state, you will need to pack for about two weeks stay, as you will be waiting for Interstate Compact (ICPC) to be completed/approved. In either case, you will normally get a few days worth of formula and infant diapers from the hospital at the time of discharge.

You will complete post placement visits with your social worker and the agency to finalize your adoption. When adoptions can be finalized varies from state-to-state, but generally speaking, this period is 6 months post placement. Your DC will be able to provide more detailed information on consents, terminations, and finalizations; such details cannot be known or predicted until sometime after you've been matched with a birth mother. It is at this point that we will know which state the birth mother resides in versus which state you reside in, hence will know which state laws will apply to your case/adoption.

Your DC will not be able to predict or guarantee any specific termination process; the process not only varies by state but also by the birth mother's particular situation, i.e. is the birth father known & named? Is he unknown? Is there more than one man named? Your DC will collaborate with her partnering agency on the case specifics/details, and a plan of action will be determined. Once a plan of action is determined, your DC promptly inform you of the plan, and will continue to keep you updated on the progression of the case as it unfolds.

When birth parent's rights have been terminated (48 hours-90 days after birth depending on state law) and your post placement visits are complete (3-6 months after receiving your child), your attorney will file the final paperwork (Petition to Adopt) to have a hearing date assigned. You will receive the adoption decree and a birth certificate with the baby's new name and your names as parents by mail. You can then apply for a social security number.

## THE PAPERWORK

No matter what kind of adoption you are doing, every adoption process is laden with administrative requirements. Try to remember that every document you complete is another step closer to your goal. Complete the paperwork requirements as expeditiously as possible.

The description of the domestic application process, home study, and required documentation is listed in our Domestic Getting Started Guide. We have also listed it here for quick reference:

### FIRST STEPS:

- AAA program application
- AAA home study application (or other HS agency if out-of-state)
- AAA home study & post placement services agreement (or other HS agency if out-of-state)
- AAA domestic services agreement (contract)
- Consent to exchange/release information
- Express shipping authorization
- Program A and/or B addendum(s)
- ICPC addendum
- Adoptive parent questionnaire

### SECOND STEP:

- Home study w/required documentation (varies by state; a list will be provided to you by your home study social worker)
- Profile creation & submission to your domestic counselor

### THIRD STEP:

- Review & Acceptance of biological parents' social & medical history
- Match acceptance & disclosure form

### FOURTH STEP:

- Adoptive placement agreement (at time of placement; can vary by state/regs.)
- Other legal documents required by attorney, hospital, or the agency at time of placement (this varies by situation, state, and sometimes even from hospital to hospital...so cannot give the specifics on this until the time of the birth mother's hospitalization and baby's birth/placement)

- Post placement reports (done by your Home Study Social Worker)

There are the basic documents that most states require for the home study and legal process. When you find out what state your baby will be from, there may be additional requirements for adoptive families; for instance, in Texas fingerprints are required. Your DC will keep you informed of these requirements.

## HOME STUDY AND EDUCATION

Our primary responsibility is to the precious children we serve. The reason a home study is conducted is to insure that our children will live in a safe and loving environment. It is our obligation to place children with families who will not hit, shake or abuse them in any way. It is our obligation to insure the environment is one in which they can grow and flourish. It is our obligation to ensure that their adoption is celebrated in your family. Our goal is to help you to be the best parents you can be for your child!

You are embarking on a new and exciting chapter in your life. Since parenting a child who is adopted has some aspects that are different than parenting through the birth experience, we know that being prepared for these differences is essential. We take the responsibility of preparing families seriously and we want you to have all the tools necessary to parent your adopted child. Your DC will provide you with the training information.

You will receive a certificate of completion for the training you receive from AAA. While you wait to be matched with your birth mother, take the opportunity to explore adoption literature and the latest information about adoption. This list offers a place for you to begin to increase your understanding of adoption as a life-long process. Children become readers by example. Read often – to and with - your children. Listed below are some great adoption-related books just to name a few!

### GENERAL PARENTING

*Becoming the Parent You Want To Be: Strategies for the First Five Years*  
Author: Laura Davis

*How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk*  
Author: Adele Faber

### ADOPTIVE PARENTING

*Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*  
Author: Sherrie Eldridge

*Adoption Parenting: Creating a Toolbox, Building Connections*  
Author: Jean MacLeod  
*Raising Adopted Children, Revised Edition: Practical Advice for Every Adoptive Parent*  
Author: Lois Ruskai Melina

*Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother*  
Author: Jana Wolff

*Attaching in Adoption*  
Author: Deborah Gray

### ADOPTION FOR CHILDREN

*The Family Book*  
Author: Todd Parr

*My Family is Forever*  
Author: Nancy Carlson

*We Belong Together: A Book about Adoption and Families*  
Author: Todd Parr  
*Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born*  
Author: Jamie Lee Curtis

### MULTICULTURAL FAMILIES

*Are Those Kids Yours?*  
Author: Cherri Register

*Cross Cultural Adoption: How to Answer Questions from Friends, Family and Community*  
Author: Amy Coughlin and Caryn Abramowitz

### FOR CHILDREN

*A Mother for Choco*  
Author: Keiko Kasza

*I Like Myself!*  
Author: Karen Beaumont

# CONSTRUCTING YOUR PROFILE

Your profile is different than your home study. The profile is the only information the birth parent(s) will have as they select the right family for their child. The first page of your profile will be the letter you compose to your birth mother. This is commonly referred to as the “Dear Birth Mother Letter.” This should be a sincere message that speaks to her. Your DC will give you written direction, assist you in this process and show you some examples of profiles. Do not make your profile based on someone else’s work. The creative spark that can come only from you will make your profile a stand-out to the right birth parent. Take your time in constructing your profile - the amount of thought and effort you put into your profile makes a difference.

## BIRTH PARENT CONSIDERATIONS

A birth mother has made the very courageous decision to give the gift of life. It is, for most birth mothers, some or all of these: inconvenient, uncomfortable, embarrassing, frightening, numbing, heart-wrenching, gut wrenching and down-right painful at the end of the pregnancy. Yet they choose life for their unborn baby. Birth mothers deserve our respect and above all to be treated with dignity.

Remember when you are considering what kind of birth mother you will accept that there are no guarantees in adoption. Some healthy birth mothers give birth to unhealthy babies; some unhealthy birth mothers give birth to healthy babies. Some babies born with medical complications grow to be healthy toddlers; some babies born healthy grow to be toddlers with medical complications. We do not remind you of this to cause fear – but to ensure that you go into your adoption with eyes wide open.

Your DC will be talking with you if your birth mother requests a meeting at the time of match, prior to &/or at the time of birth. Your birth mother is probably as nervous as you are about the meeting. If you offer her an atmosphere of acceptance and offer your friendship to her unconditionally, she will probably respond in kind. In addition, she will also get a sense of how accepting you will be of her baby. Your DC is an excellent resource of how to handle “match meetings.” Ask for guidance and support, i.e. what questions are ok or appropriate to ask in this meeting, what is not ok to ask, etc?

Every hospital event is different. As stated previously, flexibility in your expectations and thinking is a requirement, it is not an option. Some hospitals are more adoption friendly than others, some hospital nurses/doctors “get it” and some don’t. Some hospitals may provide you a room to stay at the hospital, most do not. Some hospitals may provide you a private room while you are at the hospital – a “bonding” room, others do not. Some hospitals only offer you the opportunity to visit with the birth mother and baby in her room. Your DCM will find out what the protocol is at the hospital where your birth mother is delivering and communicate the adoption plan to the hospital social worker. An agency representative, and/or your DC will be at the hospital on the day the baby is discharged.

## ADOPTION ATTORNEYS

Adoption law is complex. The agency will choose the legal representative responsible for terminating birth parent parental rights because it is the most important element in providing a secure adoption for you.

## TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

State laws change from year to year, so we will always confer with the attorney who terminates your birth parent(s) rights to ensure you have the most up-to-date information. The attorney will collaborate with us on all the state requirements. Some states have different laws for agency vs. independent adoptions. You will hear the words “surrender or relinquishment of parental rights” and “consent to adoption” – the first refers to a birth mother’s understanding that she is voluntarily relinquishing her parental rights, the second her understanding that the baby will be placed with you as the adoptive parents. There are some states that have special laws to protect minor birth parents. When you leave the hospital with a baby before the birth mother’s period to change her mind is over, the placement is considered to be “at risk”.

Colorado – A Petition for Relinquishment may be signed and filed with the court any time after the birth mother has had counseling from the state adoption office or a licensed adoption agency. It must be witnessed by a notary. A hearing to termi-

nate parental rights is scheduled after the birth, and an order signed. It is irrevocable as the order is signed except upon proof of fraud or duress.

## INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN (“ICPC”)

The ICPC is a uniform law drafted in the 1950’s, which today has been enacted in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The ICPC contains 10 articles, which establish the procedures for interstate placements and assign responsibilities for all parties involved in placing a child for adoption. The ICPC applies only to children who are placed for adoption across state lines, but not to placements made with a parent, stepparent, grandparent, or other close adult relatives.

If an adoptive family is from state A (receiving state) and the baby is born in state B (sending state), ICPC applies. In this situation:

1. The family would travel to the sending state for the adoption of the child.
2. Before they are allowed to leave the sending state, The agency in that state, would submit the ICPC paperwork to the sending state’s ICPC office.
3. After the sending state has approved the adoption, all of the paperwork would then be forwarded via traceable express mail to the receiving state’s ICPC office.
4. Once the receiving state has approved the paperwork, the family is notified of the approval, and only then can they return to their state. Once the ICPC paperwork has been submitted, it takes an average of 7-10 business days to process. This means that the baby and adoptive parents **MAY NOT LEAVE** the state until ICPC is approved and the adoptive family has been notified that it’s ok to leave the state.

If ICPC is not followed, or the family leaves before ICPC approval, the adoption could be jeopardized and the child may be returned to the sending state. In most states, the law allows for the adoptive family to stay with the child during the wait.

The ICPC offers safeguards to all parties involved in the adoption, especially the child.

- Requires both a home study of the adoptive family and an evaluation of the interstate placement to be completed.
- Ensures the sending and receiving state’s laws and policies are followed before it approves the interstate placement.
- Assigns responsibility to the sending agency, thus guaranteeing the child’s legal and financial protection.
- Allows the prospective receiving state the opportunity to consent to or deny the adoptive placement.
- Provides for continual supervision and regular reports on each interstate placement.
- Ensures the sending agency does not lose legal jurisdiction of the child after moving to the receiving state.

In order for ICPC paperwork to be filed, all required documents must be submitted together. ICPC cannot begin until one or both birth parents’ rights have been surrendered, depending on the situation involved. In addition, some of the items required for submission are not available until the day the baby is released from the hospital, including discharge paperwork and medical records. Only when these items become available can the ICPC package be completed and sent out.

Once the ICPC paperwork has been submitted, it takes an average of 7-10 business days to process. This is an average time frame and some ICPC offices can take longer. Adoptive families should make the necessary arrangements to stay in the state for at least 2 weeks. Only one parent must stay with the child. However, the wait for ICPC approval is generally out of the control of the agency. You will be contacted when ICPC approval has been given.

ICPC offices process each placement in the order they receive them. Both the agency and the ICPC offices use the fastest means of communication whenever possible including phones, fax and express mail service. Adoptive families will be notified immediately upon ICPC approval. We need to know where you are at all times during this wait and have as many contact numbers as possible. Clearance for you to return home **MUST** be received by you from our office, not your home study agency or the ICPC offices of your home state.

# HOME WITH YOUR BABY!

As you arrive home, the magnitude of caring for an infant full time can be pretty overwhelming. We cannot state strongly enough – get enough sleep! You have waited for this baby to be in your life; it is understandable that you may not want to give up any of his or her care, but try to think of the long term. You will be a better parent if you are not suffering from sleep deprivation. Work on a care plan you can live with and take advantage of assistance offered from relatives and friends.

Your social worker will schedule post-placement visits with you to ensure your transition to becoming a family is going well.

- The information you should have available for your social worker at the post placement visit is:
- The full name you want for the baby after finalization.
- The dates of birth, hospital discharge, ICPC approval and date you arrived home.
- The weight, height, head circumference and APGAR scores from the hospital.
- Any problems noted at the hospital.
- The name of the baby's pediatrician and date of first appointment.
- Any immunizations the baby has received and if any problems were noted.
- The kind of formula your baby takes, how much and how often.
- The sleep habits of your baby, day and night.
- The little things you have noticed about your baby
- How you are doing with your new family member.
- How your extended family is reacting.
- Any concerns you have about the baby or the adoption.
- The arrangements for contact with the birth mother.

Your social worker will be anxious to hear about your placement story. If you need assistance, do not be afraid to ask for it! The agency will be available if you encounter any difficulties. If the kind of help you need is beyond our scope, we have a rich network of resources we can enlist to get you the exact help you need.

Note: There is a phenomenon called the “post-adoption blues.” If you are not feeling the way you had anticipated feeling once your baby is home, talk to your social worker about it. There are things we can do to help!

It is always our privilege to assist parents & children!